

PREVENTION OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

POLICY:

To promote and maintain a safe work environment for employees free from aggression, threats and violence, effectively manage critical workplace incidents dealing with actual or potential violence, and provide a coordinated and rapid response to such incidents. The City will provide guidance in the event they encounter a situation they believe could result in a violent reaction.

It is the shared obligation of all employees, law enforcement agencies, employee organizations as well as the City administration to individually and jointly act to prevent or defuse actual or implied violent behavior at work.

The City prohibits any comments or behavior that could be perceived by a reasonable person as threatening or indicating possible violence. This may include but is not limited to verbal threats or gestures, abusive language, harassment, intimidation and physical altercation (e.g., shoving or fist fighting).

The City also prohibits the possession, use, or threat of use of a deadly weapon, firearm or destructive device in any manner, on one's person, in one's belongings, in any City facility or work area, including City vehicle, or in one's personal vehicle while engaged in City business unless such possession or use of a weapon is a necessary and approved requirement of the job. Exceptions to this policy may be made only by the City Manager.

Violence, or the threat of violence, by or against any City employee or other person is unacceptable and contrary to City policy, and will subject the perpetrator to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal and possible criminal charges. The City will work with law enforcement to aid in the prosecution of anyone who commits violent acts against employees.

PROCEDURES:

On-the Job

There are situations where relationships between employees, or between an employee and the supervisor, result in strong negative feelings. Any person involved in situations where they fear that physical retaliation may take place, or where someone has made verbal threats of physical violence, should immediately discuss it with department management. Employees involved in fighting or making verbal threats will be disciplined up to and including dismissal.

No employee acting in good faith, who reports real or implied violent behavior, will be subject to retaliation or harassment based upon their report.

If a situation is serious enough that possible termination may be involved and/or the continued presence of the employee at the work-site would not be appropriate given the altercation, or particular circumstances, the employee may be immediately suspended by being placed on paid administrative leave. The employee will be ordered not to return to the work site until further advised. This action is unusual, but may be taken with concurrence from the Department Director. Where time and circumstances permit, consultation with the Human Resources Director should take place as well.

Most workplace altercations, including minor ones involving only verbal exchanges, justify appropriate disciplinary action through the use of the City's progressive discipline policy. At any time during the review of an altercation, the Human Resources Director will be available for assistance upon request.

Dealing with the Public

Potentially violent situations may occur in employee contacts with the public. While the City has a strong commitment to customer service, it is not intended that employees be subjected to verbal abuse by a customer. A supervisor should be requested to intervene when a customer is abusive. If there is a concern over the possibility of physical violence, it should be immediately reported to the department head or the Police Department. The City will provide training to supervisors in appropriate responses to aggressive/violent behavior.

Off-the-Job

An employee may be involved in a personal non-criminal dispute with family members, neighbors or friends. If the situation escalates, a restraining order or similar court order may be issued. If an employee should request such an order, he/she should include the work location as well as place of residence in the order. The employee should inform the supervisor of the issuance of such an order and provide a description of the individual(s) cited in the order.

In a situation where an employee has not secured a court order but fears for his/her safety, the employee should notify the Police Department immediately and inform his/her supervisor as soon as practical.

When any of the above situations is brought to the attention of department management, an evaluation of the severity of the situations must be made immediately. If it is concluded that there is a likelihood that violence could result, management shall:

1. Discuss the situation with employees who are likely to come in contact with the subject. Provide a description of the subject and instructions on actions to be taken if the subject comes to the work-site.
2. Provide the same information to the Police Department.
3. Contact the Police Department to provide information on steps being taken. If the Police Department feels that more security is required, arrangements will be made to provide for it.
4. In any case, if there is an immediate need for Police Department intervention, call 911 (if on the Rolm phone system, otherwise dial 9 for an outside line first, then 911).

Critical Incident Coordination

When a supervisor, manager, or employee observes an act of violence at work, the steps to be taken are simple, even though the underlying issues may not be.

1. IN IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY SITUATIONS---CALL 911.
As with any other emergency involving fire, violence, or medical incidents, the first thought and action is to call 911 and report as many details as possible so that the appropriate emergency response units can be dispatched.
2. NEXT STEP - Immediately contact:
 - ! the Department or Division Head involved, and
 - ! the Executive Assistant City to the Manager/ Labor Relations.The Executive Assistant to the City Manager/Labor Relations is the Workplace Critical Incident Coordinator. The Executive Assistant to the City Manager/Labor Relations, or his/her designee, may be contacted at any time and will ensure that resources such as the Employee Assistance Program, Employee Benefits, Human Resources, City Attorney, and others, as needed, are coordinated in their support and response.

Other steps following a critical incident at work will flow from this initial contact, including disciplinary action and help from Employee Assistance for employees involved or witnessing a serious incident.

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGERS AND DIRECTORS

The guidelines below apply to all City employees and are intended to aid managers and directors in dealing with violent or potentially violent situations at work once an immediate emergency situation has been controlled. Altercations between persons at work are rare and usually minor, allowing time for supervisory intervention.

An "altercation" as used in these guidelines includes actual workplace violence or threatened violence, including verbal or physical confrontation or assault, or attempts at such assault.

In circumstances deemed by the manager or director to be an emergency, call 911 and make the other contacts described previously. It is understood that the actions of a manager, director, or other employees will be dependent on the seriousness of the situation and the nature of an altercation. However, consistent with personal safety, managers, directors, and supervisors have a responsibility to make a good faith effort to defuse violent or potentially violent situations as quickly as possible in order to prevent their escalation and creating a threat to others. In general...

1. Separate employees involved. Do not allow a verbal altercation to escalate into something more serious. If the employees cannot be separated, call 911 and follow the steps previously described.
2. Contact the appropriate Department Director and the Executive Assistant to the City Manager/Labor Relations.
3. Once the situation is controlled, separately interview all persons involved, including any witnesses, in order to obtain an accurate account of the incident. Document the statements of witnesses and others interviewed in written form. Those involved in an altercation - those who are possible subjects of future disciplinary action based on the incident - have the right to be represented during the interviews.

If such representation is denied or if questioning continues after representation has been requested, subsequent disciplinary action could be overturned or modified on appeal. It may be necessary to postpone an interview in such cases for a representative to be available. By contacting Human Resources at 673-7524, or the Executive Assistant to the City Manager/Labor Relations at 673-7000, extension 6511, advice and assistance in this process will be provided.

